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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving student vocabulary skills. The targeted population was fifth and sixth grade students in two growing middle class communities located north of a large midwestern city. The problem of low vocabulary skills was documented through observation of student reading and writings, teacher surveys, classroom tests, and achievement test scores. Analysis of probable cause data indicated that there was a decline in reading, a lack of motivation, and a lack of taught and implemented strategies. Review of research literature suggested there was a direct correlation between reading and vocabulary growth. Site observations indicated a decline in vocabulary acquisitions and transfer. A review of solution strategies suggested by both researchers and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the development of a program for improving vocabulary knowledge. This program involved teaching strategies such as guess and adjust, the use of context clues, and the extension of a home reading program. Post intervention data indicated improvement in vocabulary skills including context clue usage and vocabulary post tests. Students also demonstrated an increased use of independent vocabulary strategies. It should be noted that the anticipated increase in voluntary transfer of new vocabulary to writing did not occur. Students usually failed to transfer new vocabulary to writing unless teachers made specific requirements. Contains 26 references, 2 figures, and 5 tables of data. Appendixes contain student and teacher surveys, a teacher observation checklist, and a vocabulary project. (Author/SR)

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VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM FOR THE FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADES

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An Action Research Project to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight Professional Development

Field-Based Masters Program

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This report describes a program for improving student vocabulary skills. The targeted population was fifth and sixth grade students in two growing middle class communities located north of a large mid western city. The problem of low vocabulary skills was documented through observation of student reading and writings, teacher surveys, classroom tests, and achievement test scores.

Analysis of probable cause data indicated that there was a decline in reading, a lack of motivation, and a lack of taught and implemented strategies. Review of research literature suggested there was a direct correlation between reading and vocabulary growth. Site observations indicated a decline in vocabulary acquisitions and transfer.

A review of solution strategies suggested by both researchers and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the development of a program for improving vocabulary knowledge. This program involved teaching strategies such as guess and adjust, using context clues, and the extension of a home reading program.

Post intervention data indicated improvement in vocabulary skills including context clue usage and vocabulary post tests. Students also demonstrated an increased use of independent vocabulary strategies. It should be noted that the anticipated increase in voluntary transfer of new vocabulary to writing did not occur. Students usually failed to transfer new vocabulary to writing unless teachers made specific requirements.

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted fifth and sixth grade classes exhibit low vocabulary skills including: lack of transfer, ineffective use of context clues, and limited vocabulary growth. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher surveys, classroom tests, and observations of students' reading and writings.

Immediate Problem Context

This problem is occuring at two different sites, which will be described.

Site A

Site A contains grades five and six, and has been established as a middle school for the past six years. Prior to that time, this school was an intermediate, grades 3-5, and the sixth grade was housed in its own building in a nearby town . The staff averages 55 teachers with 98% females and 2% males. Teachers are members of teams, usually three to a team in the fifth grade, and five to a team in the sixth grade. Each team includes the necessary teacher aides and support staff to meet the needs of the mainstreamed, instructional learning disabled students (LD), and bilingual students (ESL). The teams meet regularly to discuss student needs. This type of team arrangement helps to enhance a closeness between teacher and students and helps to foster a caring environment.

Site B

Site B contains fourth and fifth grades. Prior to September of 1997, this facility had been a middle school, and third, fourth, and fifth grades were housed in another building which was located in close proximity to the primary and elementary schools. As of September 30, 1996, the intermediate school enrollment of third, fourth, and fifth graders was 1,634 students. Total

enrollment for the K-8 district was 4,947 students, with a projected five year enrollment of 6,408 students. In 1997, the intermediate school of Site B was reconfigured to include fourth and fifth grades. Staff at that time consisted of 94 members including 27 fourth grade teachers, 25 fifth grade teachers, two reading specialists, six LD teachers, three self contained classrooms, two ESL and two speech teachers, and three social workers. Like Site A, this intermediate school includes the necessary teacher aides and support staff to meet the needs of the mainstreamed, instructional learning disabled, and bilingual students.

Comparison of Site A and Site B

Ethnic background, and low/limited income characteristics of the school population of the two sites are included in Table 1 and Table 2. The Site A and Site B White student population is similar, and higher than the state average, which is 63.3%. Site A's Hispanic population is double that of Site B, and above the state average of 12.8%. The Black enrollment of both sites is similar, and about 16% below the state average of 20.6%. Total enrollment for Site B is over double that of Site A.

The Site A and B low-income student population is below the state average of 35.7%, however Site A's low-income student population is over three times that of Site B. Site B Limited-English Proficient students total half that of the state average of 6.1%, yet Site A Limited-English Proficient students total almost 1% higher than the state average.

Site A classrooms average 26 students, while Site B classrooms average 28.2 students. Site A teacher salaries average $43,000 and administrator's salaries average $75,000. Site B teacher salaries in 1996-97 average $36,600 and administrator's salaries average $76,000. The teacher educational experience and characteristics of the two sites are listed in Table 3.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/P. Islander	Native American	Total Enrollment
Site A	74.0%	3.0%	15.0%	8.0%	0.2%	725
Site B	79.5%	4.3%	8.7%	7.3%	0.2%	1,634
State	63.3%	20.6%	12.8%	3.1%	0.1%	1,931,871

Table 2

Low-Income and Limited-English-Proficient Students

	Low-Income	Limited-English-Proficient-
Site A	14.0%	7.0%
Site B	4.2%	2.4%
State	35.7%	6.1%

Table 3

Teaching Experience/Education

	Average Teaching Experience	Teachers with Bachelor's Degree	Teachers with Master's & Above	Pupil-Teacher Ratio Elem.
Site A	13.8 Yrs.	45.0%	55.0%	16.9:1
Site B	10.1 Yrs.	58.7%	41.3%	23.8:1
State	14.8 Yrs.	54.2%	45.6%	20.0:1

Site A teachers reflect an average of 3.8 more years of teaching experience than Site B, and Site A teachers with master's outnumber Site B teachers with master's by 14%. Pupil-teacher ratio is lower at Site A than Site B.

Major changes have occurred within both districts during the past several years. Pegasus, a literature based program, replaced the basal reading program. Special Education, ESL, LD, and

Behavior Disordered students were included in the regular education classrooms, with limited pull-out programs. Heterogeneous grouping of students in classrooms was preferred, and teachers were expected to differentiate instruction to accommodate the needs of all students within the classroom. A major district focus of Site A is improving reading Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP) scores. Student portfolio assessment, staff development, explicit lesson plan guidelines, and improvement of achievement test scores are all key focuses of the district in Site B. Both sites are negotiating contracts which were supposed to be in effect the fall of 1997, and may be contributing to labor unrest.

The Surrounding Communities

Both Sites A and B are located in medium size suburbs north of a large metropolitan area, 24-35 miles from a large international airport, and are in close proximity to a major interstate highway system. Sites A and B are located about 10-12 miles from one another. The children of both Site A and Site B reside in low, lower middle, and upper middle class neighborhoods, and come from various cultural backgrounds.

Both communities include large shopping malls, vast arrays of restaurants and other retail stores. Site A includes many large corporations. The population of Site A is 20,000, while Site B is approximately 35,000. The school district of Site A serves three surrounding communities, with a per capita income average of $22,000, and a medium income of $60,000. The percent of residents listed as low poverty level is 3.9%, household average is 4.2 persons, and residential housing average is $195,000. The school district of Site B serves four surrounding communities, with a per capita income average of $19,793, and a medium family income of $45,000.

Major changes have occurred within the two districts during the past several years. Site A is dealing with increasing enrollment due to two large developments of homes presently being built. The largest impact of these developments is expected to hit the district during the 1999-2000 school year, at which time the district will be opening its doors to a new junior high school. That same year the middle school will be housed in the present junior high location. In

Site B, the school district has also experienced phenominal growth, necessitating the building of a new middle school, and an additional high school. Many housing developments continue to transform this once rural area into a suburban area with housing that ranges from a mobile home court to large expensive private homes. Since 1990, the overall population of the Site B district has increased by an estimated 54%. This has given rise to an increase in the number of single family houses in the medium price range of $150,000-$300,000.

Both Site A and Site B communities are characterized by active community involvement. Site A includes a dynamic Parent Teachers Organization (PTO), and many dedicated parent volunteers. Site B includes the Parent Teachers Association, a friends of the school organization, many volunteers, and involved parents. Communication lines are strong between teachers and parents, and are reinforced at both sites twice a year at parent/teacher conferences.

National Context of the Problem

When addressing the reasons for the existence of low vocabulary skills, one should observe the change in emphasis on vocabulary skills in literature based programs. For instance, in traditional basal programs, vocabulary skills are directly taught (Allington et al., 1987), yet in literature based programs, skills are indirectly taught or vocabulary is student selected (Santa, 1993).

Using literature to teach students the meaning of words makes sense intuitively. Students can be taught a strategy for identifying important vocabulary and for learning those words within the context of a literature selection (Dole, Sloan, & Trathen, 1995). Yet some disturbing evidence has shown that test scores are down, and children are not comprehending and reading as well as their predecessors (Dole et al., 1995). It is important to carefully examine how instruction of vocabulary contributes to the students increased vocabulary knowledge and comprehension performance.

In 1994, one quarter of the nation's high school seniors and nearly a third of the eighth graders failed to reach even the basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP) reading assessments (Barton, 1997). An alarming portion of the population has difficulty reading common text: news articles, maps, report cards, coupons, recipes, even medicine directions. Furthermore, the nature of the economy is changing and CEO's of major corporations are requiring higher literacy standards to meet the fast-paced demands. If students are unable to read at these higher levels, comprehend and use more advanced vocabulary, then they may have difficulty finding and holding a job.

It is known that there is a correlation between knowing words and reading well (Nagy, 1993). "Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension: one cannot understand text without knowing what most of the words mean" (Nagy, 1993, p.1). It is prevalent in reading literature that the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension is intertwined. Students with extensive vocabularies do better on reading comprehension tests than students with smaller vocabularies. Teachers should expect students who know more words to better understand what they read. "Vocabulary instruction that promotes word consciousness, a sense of curiosity about word meaning, appreciation of nuances, independence in word analysis, and wide regular reading appears to be superior to conventional instruction" (Anderson & Nagy, 1993, p.1). Many currently used literature based programs show an emphasis on comprehension, yet do not link this with vocabulary skills.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Within the targeted fifth and sixth grade schools, documentation was collected to show evidence that low vocabulary skills existed. Several instruments were utilized for the purpose of data collection. Teachers participated in affective surveys, which were distributed the first week of the 1998 school year. A vocabulary test was administered at both sites. Observation of vocabulary transfer to student writing was recorded through a monthly checklist, and observation of students' use of context clues was also recorded through the same checklist.

Teacher Survey

A teacher survey was distributed to forty-two fifth and sixth grade teachers. Twenty-eight teachers responded to the survey, the results of which are illustrated in Table 4. The results of the teacher survey indicate that over 50% of students lack transfer of vocabulary, and more than 50% have an ineffective use of context clues. The majority of the teachers prefer teacher selected vocabulary over student selected vocabulary. Although the majority of teachers surveyed stated that they directly teach their students how to infer meaning through context, 93% devoted less than 60 minutes to vocabulary instruction. Most teachers agreed that 50% or more of their students lack transfer, have low vocabulary skills, and have ineffective use of context clues. These results provide evidence that the problem of low vocabulary skills does exist. The vocabulary tests further document the existence of this problem.

Vocabulary Test

A vocabulary test was administered to students at both sites. In both instances, students were asked to choose vocabulary from a word box to fill in sentence blanks. Three weeks prior to

the test, students had been involved in a vocabulary activity which included using dictionaries to define a teacher selected list of words. In Sites A and B, students were asked to use a two column note format to list the word, a sentence from the novel which included the word, and a dictionary definition. No other activities were used to promote understanding of the vocabulary.

The results of the vocabulary test at Site A demonstrated that out of eighty-nine students, 40% scored between 80-89%, 40% scored between 70-79%, and 20% failed the test, scoring 60% or lower. The results of the vocabulary test of Site B showed that of twenty five students in the class, 50% scored between 80-89% or above, 20% scored between 70-80%, and 30% failed the test, scoring 60% or lower.

Table 4

Teacher Survey Results

Question	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
% of vocabulary instruction that is only student selected	5	15	6	2	0
% of vocabulary instruction that is only teacher selected	0	2	6	15	5
% of students with low vocabulary skills	1	14	9	4	0
% of students who lack transfer of vocabulary	2	5	18	2	1
% of students having ineffective use of context clues	2	10	16	0	0

As a result of these test findings it can be noted that students are generally not successful at fill in the blank testing when only typical dictionary methods are used prior to the test. These

results provide evidence that the problem of low vocabulary skills does exist. The observation checklist further documents the existence of this problem.

Observation Checklist

Students were observed the first month on their ability to determine meaning through context clues, ability to use new vocabulary words in journal writing, and their ability to show correct meaning in sentence creation. It was found in Sites A and B that students failed to use new vocabulary words in writing unless they were assigned to do so by the teacher. At Site A the sixth grade students were proficient when determining meaning through context clues, however, they did not correctly show meaning through student created sentences. At Site B half of the fifth grade students were able to determine meaning of vocabulary through context clues. In contrast, only one-forth of these students showed correct meaning of vocabulary words in their sentence creation. At both Sites A and B, some students failed to include the actual vocabulary word in their sentence that was suppose to show meaning. Upon examining the evidence of teacher surveys, vocabulary tests, and observations checklist, it is clear that students lack the skills necessary for developing a higher vocabulary. There exists several possible causes for the lack of vocabulary skills in students.

Probable Causes

Analysis of Sites A and B and of research literature reveal several possible causes for lack of vocabulary skills in students. These causes include a decline in reading, lack of motivation, and a lack of taught and implemented strategies.

Decline in Reading

According to research, one of the major causes of students' lowered vocabulary acquisition is a decline in reading (Dole et al, 1995; Irvin, 1990; Worthy, 1996). "Vocabulary building is central to all reading development," and enables children to "deal with more difficult text" (Robb, 1996, p. 75). Hence, it is natural to assume that if reading declines, vocabulary building will decline also. Research continues to support the idea that if the quantity of reading

improves, vocabulary increases. In fact, the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension is well established in the reading literature. (Davis, Spearrit, & Thorndyke as cited in Dole, et al., 1995). "The relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge is strong and unequivocal" (Baker, Kameenui, & Simmons, 1995, p. 36). To illustrate, Nagy (1993) formulates through research that a "moderate level of daily reading can lead to gains of several thousand words per year"(p. 47). According to Irvin (1990), after third grade a reasonable amount of reading may be the single largest source of vocabulary growth. Despite this knowledge, observation shows a decline in reading.

Figure 1 exhibits evidence that reading as a free time activity is not a top priority, and therefore a possible cause for low vocabulary skills. An anonymous survey of students at both sites was conducted to gather information about reading as a free time activity, and feelings about reading and vocabulary study (Appendix A). Surveys were completed by 111 fifth and sixth grade students. Figure 1 illustrates the results of a free response question in which students were asked to explain their preference of free time activities.

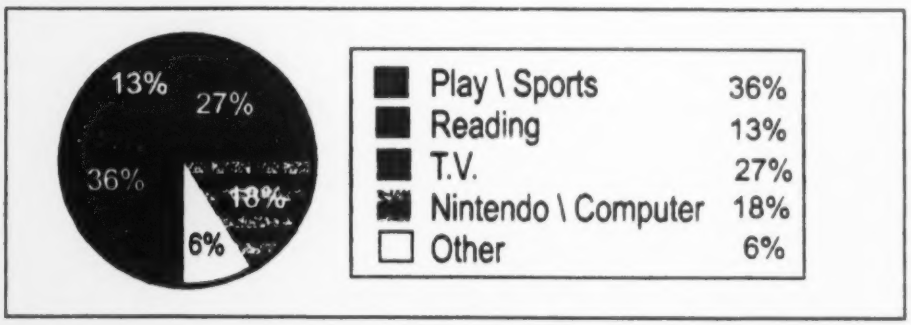

Figure 1. How students' free time is spent.

Of all students surveyed, only 13% chose reading as a free time activity. The majority of students preferred sports and play, watching T.V., playing video games, or other activities. It is evident that reading generally is not a chosen free time activity by fifth and sixth grade students.

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Worthy (1996) feels that although students begin school with a positive attitude about reading, voluntary reading shows a steady decline as students progress through school. One possible explanation for this decline may be related to the changes in lifestyle over the last few decades. For example, the majority of a child's leisure time is spent in activities such as sports, clubs, audiovisual games and activities, and reading is no longer considered a popular form of entertainment.

Data from Figure 2 supports the idea that students are spending a limited amount of time reading at home. The bar graph illustrates that of 111 students surveyed, the majority of students spent less than 120 minutes reading each week. Only 32 students read more than the minimum requirement of 120 minutes per week. It is worth noting that 64% of all students surveyed at Sites A and B are not meeting the minimum requirements for their schools at home reading program. The amount of time students spend reading has been considered as a possible cause of students' lowered vocabulary skills.

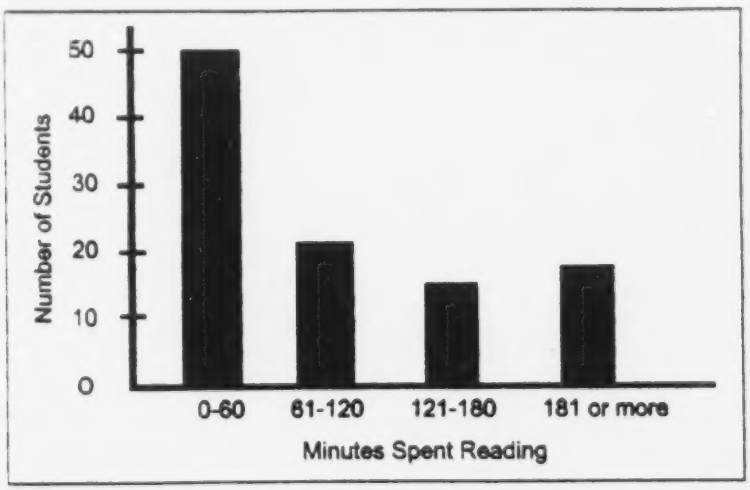

Figure 2. Student at home reading habits.

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Another possible explanation for this decline is forcing students to read literature they do not find interesting, resulting in a negative attitude about reading (Worthy,1996). This decline in reading has even attracted national attention, and improving the decline has become a political issue (American Educator, 1998). From the office of the president, filtering into school districts throughout the country, the goal of having every child read competently and confidently has become a national priority (American Educator, 1998). Unless competency in reading improves, the nation will continue to see lower reading levels. Related to this decline in reading is another cause of lowered vocabulary acquizition, lack of motivation.

Lack of Motivation

A lack of motivation among students to acquire new vocabulary seems to be present, and is a probable cause of reduced vocabulary. According to Ruddiman (1993), students do not take charge of their own learning, and do not have enthusiasm for language building. Motivation is an important part of word study (Fisher & Terry, 1977). Traditional methods of learning word meanings in isolation through dictionary studies fail to motivate students because they do not relate the vocabulary to their lives (Estes, 1993). Teachers who are successful in extending children's vocabularies realize the significance of motivation. In other words, teachers need to motivate their students through varied vocabulary instruction.

Vocabulary Instruction

A third possible cause of students' lowered vocabulary acquizition seems to be related to teachers' vocabulary instruction itself. Three components important in teacher vocabulary instruction, yet sometimes missing, include seizing opportune moments, careful planning, and teaching proper use of dictionaries without over-reliance on them.

Failure to seize opportune moments. Frequently, teachers fail to seize opportune moments to teach students about new vocabulary words (Fisher & Terry, 1977). According to Fisher and Terry (1977), all types of learning and communication experiences offer opportunities to develop a child's vocabulary. For example, using field trips, school assemblies, popular

television programs, games, and other content areas as the occasion demands, will help build students' interest in vocabulary. Vocabulary instuction must seize teachable moments, and be carefully planned, if understanding and appreciation of words is to occur (Anderson & Nagy, 1993).

Careful planning. Sometimes, careful planning of vocabulary instruction is lacking within the reading or language arts curriculum. Vocabulary development in school must be a planned program (Fisher & Terry, 1977). Teachers can help students become more enthusiastic about learning vocabulary through creative lessons (Coronet Film & Video, 1979). Even though increased reading can produce a larger vocabulary, the "chance of learning a word while reading is much lower than learning the same word through direct vocabulary instruction" (Anderson & Nagy, 1993, p. 9). Even recent research believes that teaching specific words that appear in texts and encouraging students to take the opportunities to utilize these words can help build students' vocabulary (Learning First Alliance, 1998). In addition to teachers' lack of planning , another deficient area in teachers' instruction is improper usage and over-reliance on dictionaries.

Improper use of dictionaries. Research has shown that improper use and over reliance on dictionaries as teaching aids, does not increase vocabulary instruction reliably (Nagy, 1988). For example, dictionaries are improperly used by students who may know how to locate a word but fail to correctly figure out which definition to choose (Anderson & Nagy, 1993). To support this, Irvin (1990) states, " definitions do not always contain enough information for understanding and using a word" (p. 13). Overreliance of dictionaries can be seen in student memorization of definitions. Memorizing the definition of a word is not the same as knowing its meaning (Anderson & Nagy, 1993). For example, few people can instantly formulate the definition for embarrass, but most people understand its meaning. In fact, Anderson and Nagy (1993) feel "you don't really know a word, until you no longer think of the definition when you read it" (p. 6). By itself, the activity of looking up words in a dictionary or committing definitions to memory does not lead to improved comprehension (Irvin, 1990). Finally, in addition to the issues examined

relating to vocabulary instruction, an additional cause of deficient vocabulary skills is connected to students failure to use strategies.

Lack of Strategies

Lastly, another probable cause for lack of vocabulary acquisition relates to the idea that students lack strategies. According to Robb, (1996) this lack of strategies, (different from practiced skills) causes readers to give up when they encounter an unknown word. Context clues (Johnson & Pearson, 1978) should be used to move the focus from one individual word to other words. Skills become strategies when a learner uses it independently, reflects on it, and applies it to new reading materials" (Robb, 1996). Another strategy students lack is relating words to ideas (Irvin, 1990). Sometimes students fail to think deeply about a word and how it "functions in our language" (Robb, 1996, p. 68). Teaching vocabulary from isolated lists of words can be counterproductive because students fail to connect these words to their personal word use and their own reading (Ianacone, 1993).

To summarize, research and site observations show that lack of vocabulary acquisition is caused not only by a decline in reading but also by student's lack of motivation and lack of taught and implemented strategies. The solutions to these strategies, which are carefully planned, that will enrich students vocabulary relate to increasing reading, using games, activities and cooperative learning, and teaching independent strategies.

CHAPTER 3

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The research findings show that students' vocabulary can be enriched through a variety of strategies. These include increasing students' reading, using games, cooperative learning, and other activities to motivate students, and teacher instruction that provides students with independent strategies.

Increasing Students Reading

Most theorists agree that reading volume, rather than oral language, is the main contributor to increasing vocabulary (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). A planned reading program that includes teacher read-a-loud and encourages students to read independently will help to increase a students' vocabulary (Illinois State Board of Education, 1997). Planned programs chosen to increase students' independent reading include: Accelerated Reader, home reading logs, 600 Minute program, and Pizza Hut reading incentive.

Accelerated Reader. The Accelerated Reader Program is a program designed to increase reading by encouraging students to read self-selected books, and having them test their comprehension on computer installed tests. After students read a novel that is near their reading level, they test themselves on the computer. The tests are about ten questions in length, and students receive immediate feedback on the results of their tests. To increase their reading level, students are encouraged to challenge themselves by gradually choosing books that are at a slightly higher reading level. Home reading logs have also been shown to increase student independent reading.

Home reading logs. Home reading logs are another contributor important in a planned reading program. Students can be encouraged to set at home reading goals for themselves, or

goals can be chosen by individual teachers, or by school districts. Various logs are available, and the students themselves can log their minutes read, list book titles, and have parents supervise, and sign. The logs can then be returned to their teachers, who can show students' progress on a classroom chart. At Site B, a monthly calender log was completed by the students. One home reading program that sets specific reading goals is the 600 minute program.

600-Minute Program. The 600-Minute Program is another incentive to encourage independent reading. Six Flags Theme Parks Inc. offers a READ TO SUCCEED 600-Minute Reading Club. The club is designed to give students an achievable goal in outside reading and to provide them with a strong motivation for reaching that goal. This club challenges students to read for pleasure with the offer of a very exciting award - a free admission to their local Six Flags Theme Park. Teachers whose students become members of the club are also awarded one free admission. To receive their award, a student in grades K - 6 who completes a minimum of 600 minutes of recreational reading between early January and the end of February will become a member of the 600-Minute Reading Club. Since 1988, almost 5 million students have participated in the 600-Minute Reading Club. A similiar incentive program offered to students is the Pizza Hut reading program.

Pizza Hut. The Pizza Hut reading program was another incentive program that was used at both Sites A and B to increase students' at home reading. Pizza Hut developed this program which encourages teachers to set goals for their students, in which students record their minutes read on a monthly calender. At the end of the month, students turn in the completed calender. Parents sign the calender to show they agreed with the minutes the child recorded. At the end of the month, if a student brings in a parent signed calender, showing they have successfully completed their reading goals, the student receives a certificate good for one free personal size pizza at Pizza Hut. Additonal incentives include rewards of a pizza party if the whole class completes its goal for four out of five months.

In addition to implementing a planned program, students reading can be increased by providing a good collection of books. Books that provide interesting words in text shold be kept in the classroom and available in the school library. For example, Sloan (1996) discusses the importance of good books and literature rich in vocabulary and even provides a list of these books. Reading should be made meaningful and successful by using interesting literature and books appropriate to the students' maturity levels (Worthy, 1996). Most research supports the idea that paired reading activities are also important in a planned reading program. (Santa, 1994; Worthy, 1996). Worthy suggests setting up multiage partnerships, in which an older struggling reader "reads to a younger child...to help improve their self concept and attitude about reading" (Worthy, 1996, p. 208). Santa (1994) encourages partner reading during the reading of various chapters of its classroom novel literature program stating that a successful reading workship includes "collaboration" (p. 173). Students enjoy and benefit from a reading program that includes not only the above activites, but that also includes other games and cooperative learning activities.

Using Games, Cooperative Learning, and Other Activities

Most hands-on activities relating to students' vocabulary not only motivate students, but also help students to understand usage of words. Games, cooperative learning and other activities are a few of the many tools used to help students develop vocabulary meaning, and usage in their daily lives.

Games. There are many games that can motivate students' to increase their vocabulary. Ianacone (1993) suggests a word search game that consists of students finding words from their outside reading and then sharing them with the class. Ekwall (1979) suggests using contests to motivate students. Coronet Film & Video (1979) provides a variety of additional games to help students use newly acquired vocabulary words. For example, one of the games follows similar instructions as Jeopardy, where students are provided a meaning and they must give the correct word to match it.

A third game is Ruddiman's (1993) vocabulary game which involves students finding words from the "real world" to stump their teacher and gain points for their team. For example, each student brings one vocabulary word to their group each week. The words are checked to see if they meet the criteria, and one is selected to present to the teacher. If the teacher knows the word, the teacher gains five points. If the group is able to stump the teacher, the class is awarded the five points. A running total is kept until the class acquires 100 points, at which time a class reward is given. Besides games, interraction through cooperative learning, can help students develop new vocabulary usage.

Cooperative learning. Implementing cooperative learning as a strategy is also important in vocabulary instruction. For example, Wilkinson (1994) believes combining cooperative learning and story development by student groups can enliven vocabulary lessons. "This combined activity has multiple benefits: stimulates brainstorming, reinforces the vocabulary words, and helps shyer students to develop confidence in classroom participation" (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 222). Irvin (1990) describes an activity in which students share previous word encounters through cooperative learning. The teacher elicits from students as many words as possible related to that particular subject. In teams, the students group the related items into appropriate categories. The teams then label each group of related words using other words, signs, or symbols.

There are many cooperative activities which utilize pictures to help students remember the meaning of new words. One such cooperative activity involves students individually creating vocabulary cards to help them recall meanings of words. To exemplify, students share their individually created vocabulary cards which include pictures, and through the use of these cards, meanings of words are visualized and remembered. Another picture activity is 'Picture Vocabulary' in which cooperative groups create butcher block paper posters that illustrate with pictures, the meanings of five or six vocabulary words. After illustrating these words, posters can be presented to the class by groups for review. A third strategy is the Portmanteau Strategy described by Bellanca & Fogarty (1991). This strategy can be modified by using real words,

having students illustrate their words on vocabulary cards, and then 'jigsaw' teaching them to groups. Irvin (1990) describes an additional cooperative activity in which students share previous word encounters. In addition to games, and cooperative learning, there are a variety of other activities that can promote and enliven vocabulary learning.

Other activities. Utilizing activities separate from the classroom are also essential to motivate student learning (Coronet Film & Video, 1979). For example, field trips "can provide opportunities to introduce new words, discuss them, and do something with them after the experience" (Fisher & Terry, 1977, p. 95). After special trips, a teacher can discuss the experience using new words relating to the experience. Children are more anxious to learn words that they have actually experienced. A related activity involves students using their favorite television programs to discover interesting new words. To sum up, vocabulary instruction that promotes student involvement is more effective than passive activities with words (Irvin, 1990). Besides the use of games, cooperative learning, and other activities, teachers need to include within their classroom instruction, strategies that will help students become independent learners.

Teacher Provided Instruction Of Strategies

Teachers' vocabulary instruction is also important in providing students with a variety of strategies to use when they encounter unfamiliar words. Children simply need to be made aware of how context clues can be helpful to them (Fisher & Terry, 1977) and teachers must model this process. Robb (1997) suggests using the guess and adjust prereading strategy to arouse students' curiosity about words they will encounter. To illustrate, students guess the meaning of words, then after reading, they adjust their guesses through a shared reading activity. In this way, students become aware of using context clues to decipher meaning. Once this strategy has been modeled and learned, students can use it independently.

Another instructional technique is learning vocabulary through listening. Elley (1989) found that children could learn word meanings from listening to stories. "Learning word meanings

from listening may be more important for the child with reading problems, who is cut off from a significant source of vocabulary growth, that of written text" (Richek, Stahl, & Vandevier, 1990, p. 56). This is why it is so important for teachers to include in their daily lessons time spent reading aloud to the class. Richek, Stahl, and Vandevier's (1990) study states that just 10 minutes spent reading aloud will help increase the students' store of word meanings.

Dictionaries are still important in vocabulary acquistion, but should be used in conjunction with context instruction and other strategies (Irvin, 1990). Traditional dictionary based instruction does not produce results, although dictionaries are still important references. School dictionaries and glossaries should be improved and teachers must do a better job modeling use of dictionaries (Anderson & Nagy, 1990). Modeling vocabulary words in classroom instruction is also helpful for students to see the relevance and understand the connotations of content area vocabulary (Barton, 1997). To support this, Irvin (1990) feels that many encounters with new vocabulary words and use of the new words in meaningful ways will increase students' chance of further use and understanding of new vocabulary. Along with classroom strategies, independent strategies need to be provided.

Independent Strategies

There are many independent strategies that can be modeled in the classroom."Helping students make the most of learning words independently is imperative" (Irvin, 1990, p. 9). One independent strategy requires students to use new information by comparing it with known information, therefore requiring them to construct their own word meanings. In fact Griswold (as cited in Baker, Kameenui & Simmons, 1995) states that prior knowledge contributes more to vocabulary learning than memorization strategies. A second strategy, semantic organizers, including mapping and feature analysis, can help students establish connections between new information and familiar information (Nagy, 1988). Most experts agree that using context clues as a strategy is still a useful instructional practice especially when combined with other learning strategies. Nagy (as cited by Irvin, 1990) maintains that a combination of strategies is more

effective than any approach alone. Robb's strategy "Read On Then Reread" (Robb, 1996) encourages students to unravel meaning through the use of context clues in a seven step process. To conclude, good teaching provides the learner with strategies not only for learning the task at hand, but for independent learning beyond the task at hand (Irvin, 1990). A successful vocabulary program should include increasing students independent reading, using cooperative learning, implementation of a variety of vocabulary activities, and teacher instruction that includes independent strategies.

Project Objective

As a result of increased efforts to improve vocabulary acquisition, during the period of September, 1998, to December, 1998, the targeted fifth and sixth graders will increase their use of strategies to improve their individual vocabulary, and will transfer this vocabulary knowledge to their writing. This improvement will be measured by teacher observations, teacher and student surveys, test scores, and student samples.

In order to accomplish the above objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Increase individual student reading time.
2. Include strategies that foster vocabulary growth.
3. Teachers will model a series of vocabulary activities and games.

Action Plan

The following steps will be taken to implement the intervention:

I. Develop surveys for teachers and students, and an observational checklist:

A.	Who	the researchers
B.	What	provide surveys
C.	When	first week of September
D.	Why	to collect data and opinions regarding instruction and attitude about vocabulary

II. Increase individual student reading time.

	A.	Who	the students
	B.	What	follow teacher at home reading guidelines of 2 hours per week
	C.	When	first week of school
	D.	Why	encourage individual reading
	E.	Where	at home
	F.	How	parents will supervise and sign reading logs
III.	Motivate students to increase their vocabulary through various activities.		
	A.	Who	the teacher will plan lessons for the students.
	B.	What	guess and adjust strategy, model context clues, dictionary usage, and cooperative learning activities
	C.	When	throughout the first semester
	D.	Why	to help students increase vocabulary knowledge
	E.	Where	in classroom
	F.	How	model and supervise activities
IV.	Develop skill of transferring vocabulary to writing		
	A.	Who	the students
	B.	What	use new vocabulary in writing
	C.	When	October through December
	D.	Why	improve quality of writing
	E.	Where	in classroom and at home
V.	Evaluate test scores		
	A.	Who	teacher
	B.	What	classroom vocabulary test
	C.	When	September through December
	D.	Why	to determine if students are acquiring vocabulary

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects fo the intervention, student writings, vocabulary tests, and observation checklists will be examined. The writings will show transfer and proper usage of new vocabulary words. In addition, observation checklists will provide ongoing feedback of strategy usage and knowledge.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to enrich students' vocabulary through a use of strategies, and to facilitate the transfer of this vocabulary knowledge to their writing. In order to achieve the desired results, a program was implemented that included increasing students' reading, using games, cooperative learning, and teacher instruction that provided students with independent strategies. Other components of the program included teacher and student surveys, observational checklists, and vocabulary tests.

During the first week of school, teachers and students responded to surveys (see Appendix B) to establish evidence for a need of increased vocabulary skills. The original plans called for three months of approximately 40-80 minutes a week of vocabulary instruction. During this instruction, students were encouraged to include their new vocabulary words in journal writing. The students were also required to use their new vocabulary in sentence creation. Other methods used to strengthen vocabulary skills included providing increased reading time in school and furnishing students with nationally known reading incentives to increase at home reading. In addition to this, other activities were supplemented to promote vocabulary growth. These activities included vocabulary flashcards and games, activity sheets, graphic organizers, and cooperative group vocabulary presentations. Vocabulary growth was documented through a variety of methods.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, observational checklists, tests, and activities were implemented.

Checklists

The teachers from Sites A and B kept observational checklists recording information to show how the vocabulary program was developing (see Appendix C). During the month of October, most of the sixth grade students at Site A could determine meaning of vocabulary through context clues, yet the majority of fifth grade students at Site B had not mastered this skill. As the observations progressed through November and December, Site B showed progressive improvement in context clue usage. In addition to observational checklists, student writing samples were examined to detect if students were transferring new vocabulary words into their writing.

Table 5

Number of Students by Site (N=100 for Site A, N=25 for Site B) Exhibiting Vocabulary Skill

	Can determine meaning through context clues.			Uses new vocab. words in journal writing.			Is able to show correct meaning in sentence creation.		
SITE	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
A	68	87	95	41	52	61	68	72	85
B	7	11	21	9	14	15	10	14	19

It was noted through teacher observation at both Sites A and B that students had trouble transferring vocabulary into their writing. When required to do so, students would consciously make the effort to use their newly learned vocabulary words. If a requirement was not made by the teachers at both sites, then students continued, even in November, to have difficulty transferring new vocabulary words into their writing. Besides writing samples, tests were used to measure students' vocabulary growth.

Tests

In early September when pretests were given, it was evident that students lacked vocabulary knowledge and individual strategies to learn the vocabulary. At both sites, strategies were implemented approximately twice a week, and both sites showed gradual improvement through the 12 week program. In addition, students were tested periodically through a variety of test to determine vocabulary growth. Strategies were taught through various activities throughout the program.

Activities

From the beginning, students actively participated in vocabulary activities. These activities not only motivated the students, but also helped students to understand usage of words. At both sites, students discovered the relationship between words due to the similar base words or parts. Students experienced success on post tests after completing the vocabulary activities. At Site A, a pretest was administered prior to a vocabulary activity. After vocabulary activities were implemented, a post test showed a 50% increase in scores. At the culmination of these activities several conclusions could be drawn.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, students showed a marked increase in vocabulary skills which included use of context clues and overall vocabulary growth. Students showed only a limited increase in transfer of vocabulary to their writing. The skills learned during the program appear to have assisted students in their vocabulary knowledge. The increase in scores on post tests leaves one to suspect that the strategies taught prior were successful. One significant lesson entailed students making vocabulary games using words selected from their reading novel (Appendix D). Making and playing the games empowered the students to acquire new vocabulary. Similarly, students were excited to discover the relationships of base words and related words during the vocabulary games. In general, teaching students alternative vocabulary strategies enabled them to become more proficient at vocabulary skills.

Several recommendations can be made to teachers in the use of this program. Vocabulary activities need to be regularly included within weekly lesson plans. Students respond positively when activities were diverse, hands-on, and completed in cooperative groups on a weekly basis when possible.

Teachers must take time to seize opportune moments when teaching vocabulary. If, for example, the class has just been on a field trip, time could be taken to discuss new ideas and words related to that field trip. When time is taken to do this, students learn how to transfer these words into their everyday vocabulary and writing. Other academic teachers must also seize opportune moments to integrate vocabulary study across the curriculum. These teachers need to help students make the connection of vocabulary between different subject areas. When students make this connection their vocabulary base becomes more extensive. To have a link between vocabulary and writing, teachers must continually encourage students to incorporate new vocabulary into their writing. In many cases students won't include new vocabulary words in their writing unless specified by the teacher.

Finally, reading needs to be regularly included in weekly lesson plans and encouraged through home reading incentive programs. Through increased reading, students receive more exposure to familiar and new words, which develops understanding of word usage and meanings. Programs such as Accelerated Reader, 600 Minute Reading Club, and home reading logs are highly recommended and have shown to be positive incentives for reading outside of the classroom.

In conclusion, this program is recommended because of the enrichment it provides to the students in the area of vocabulary. Improving vocabulary is vital for students to succeed in all academic areas. When students encounter unfamiliar vocabulary words, from this program they will also have acquired the necessary strategies to successfully understand the meaning of the word and how to use the new vocabulary appropriately. By providing students with strategies, they will not be apprehensive, and will positively approach their reading. Once a strategy is

modeled and learned, students can use it independently and become independent learners. Teachers need to instruct students on how to use these strategies. They also need to play an active role in helping students develop an increased and more enriched vocabulary. This is necessary since students don't take the initiative to acquire strategies on their own. Through teacher reinforcement vocabulary becomes second nature in their students' writing. If students are going to met the demands that lie ahead, then they must read, comprehend, and develop vocablulary at a more advanced level. Teachers need to raise their level of expectations for students to achieve these goals.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT SURVEY

* STUDENT SURVEY *

Please answer the following questions honestly. This survey is anonymous, (No names please) so you don't have to worry about a grade!

1. How many minutes per week do you spend reading at home?_____

IN RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, PUT AN x IN THE BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOU:

	I enjoy it.	It's OK.	I don't really like it.
2. How do you feel about silent reading?			
3. How do you feel about Teacher Read Aloud?			
4. How do you feel about learning new vocabulary words?			
5. How do you feel about using the dictionary to look up new words?			
6. How do you feel about learning new words through games & other group activities ?			

CIRCLE THE ANSWER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOU.

7. While reading, when you come to a word you don't know do you:
   A. Skip the word. B. Use the words around it to figure out the meaning.
   C. Look the word up in a dictionary. D. Guess at its meaning.

8. Do you try to use new vocabulary words in your writing?
   A. Never B. Sometimes C. Often

9. How do you spend most of your free time? Explain...(Example: sports, read, nintendo, TV, etc.) _____

_____

APPENDIX B

TEACHER SURVEY

VOCABULARY - TEACHER SURVEY

Place a check in the appropriate box for each question

	<20	21-40	41-60	61-80	>81
1 How many minutes a week do you read aloud in each L A class?					
2 How many minutes a week does each class read silently?					
3 How many minutes a week do you devote to vocabulary instruction or activities?					
Approximate Percentages	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
4 Approximately what percent of your yearly vocabulary instruction includes only student selected vocabulary?					
5 What percent of your yearly vocabulary instruction is teacher selected vocabulary? *Totals for questions 4 & 5 equal 100%					
6 Approximately what % of your students have low vocabulary skills?					
7 Approximately what % of your students lack transfer of vocabulary?					
8 Approximately what % of your students have an ineffective use of context clues?					

9 What methods of vocabulary instruction do you use: #1 Most oftenly used #2 Frequently used #3 Seldom used #4 Never used	Use dictionary to define word	Students use context clues	Students supply antonym/synonym	Other activities

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10 How often do you teach the students directly how to infer the meaning of the word through context?

Never	Once a year	2-3 times a year	4-5 times a year	6 or more

11 Do you observe vocabulary growth in your students writing through your present reading program?

_____YES _____NO

12 Do you notice a decline in your students' interest in outside reading through observation, reading logs, or classroom discussion?

_____YES _____NO

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APPENDIX C

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST - Vocabulary

	Can determine meaning through context clues.			Uses new vocab. words in journal writing.			Is able to show correct meaning in sentence creation.		
NAMES:	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.

APPENDIX D

VOCABULARY PROJECT

VOCABULARY PROJECT

_____

(Title of Your Game)

1. Did your game contain at least 12 of the vocabulary words?
2. Were the directions easy to follow?
3. Did you provide an answer key?
4. Was your game presented in an organized and neat manner?
5. Did you have an eye-catching title?
6. Is your game enjoyable to play?
7. Are all the pieces of your game in one package?
8. If someone was to play your game, would it help them to learn the meaning of the words?

COMMENTS

NAMES

_____

_____

_____